promote fishing industry in the country through co-operative action. During the last three years an amount of Rs. 4.37 Crore have been released to FISHCOPFED.

Alternative occupations for small and marginal farmers

†32. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Commission for Farmers, constituted by Government has indicated that marginal and small farmers intend to opt much profitable occupations instead of cultivation as it is not economically profitable;

(b) if **so,** the steps taken by Government to initiate other occupations alongwith agriculture; and

(c) the action taken by Government for bio-conservation in bio-diversity rich States like Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Sikkim of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) National Commission on Farmers indicated that, as per national Sample Survey Organisation's survey, about 40% of farmers would like to quit farming if they had the option to do so. However, as such options are little, the Commission, in its Revised Draft National Policy for Farmers, recommended several measures to enhance productivity and income of small farms and farmers and to diversify employment opportunities by strengthening production-processing-value addition-marketing-consumer chain. The Commission also recommended several methods by which small and marginal farmers can gain efficiency and economy like cooperative farming, group farming by Self-Help Groups, small holders' estates, contract farming and Farmers' Companies etc. Government is also implementing several programmes like Bharat Nirman, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, schemes for promotion of small and micro enterprises and food processing industries and skill development training to create employment opportunities in the non-farm sector.

(c) The existing National Agriculture Policy aims at growth that is based on efficient use of resources and conserves soil, water and bio-diversity. Government are implementing several programmes in this regard like National Project on Organic Farming, Integrated Nutrient Management, Integrated Pest Management, National Horticulture Mission and Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in the North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Bird-flu in poultry in North East

33. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the latest 'outbreak of bird flu in poultry in the remote North-East was the H5N1 strain;

(b) if so, what preventive measures have been taken by Government, so far;

(c) in how many North-Eastern States this virus has spread; and

(d) how many people have, so far, been affected?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.